

HLB 2025 Report

# THE LINK BETWEEN INNOVATION AND NEURODIVERSITY



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# FOREWORDS



**STEPHANIE RIX**

Chief People Officer, HLB Global

The world of business is changing faster than ever before. Markets shift overnight, technology is evolving at breakneck speed, and the challenges we face as organisations grow more complex by the day.

In this environment, the organisations that thrive aren't just those with the best resources or biggest budgets - they are the ones that can think differently, solve problems creatively, and see opportunities where others see obstacles.

This is where neurodiversity becomes not just a moral imperative but a competitive advantage.

For too long we have approached workplace inclusion as something we should do because it's right. And it is absolutely right. But, as we should do what our research reveals is that building truly inclusive, human-centred workplaces isn't just about doing good, it's about doing good business.

When we bring together minds that process information differently, that notice patterns others miss, that approach problems from unexpected angles, something remarkable happens. Innovation doesn't just improve, it accelerates. Solutions

emerge that wouldn't have existed in more homogenous teams. The whole becomes genuinely greater than the sum of its parts.

In professional services, we're uniquely positioned to lead this transformation. Our profession demands precision, analytical thinking, and attention to detail - strengths that many neurodiverse individuals possess in abundance. But more than that, we are trusted advisors to businesses across every industry. When we model inclusive practices and demonstrate their value, we influence change far beyond our own firms.

This research report shows what's possible when we stop trying to fit square pegs into round holes and instead design workplaces that embrace the full spectrum of human thinking. The question isn't whether we can afford to build more inclusive workplaces. It's whether we can afford not to.

The future belongs to organisations brave enough to harness the full spectrum of human potential. This research and its supporting toolkit show us how to get there.

# FOREWORDS



**ABU BAKKAR**

Chief Innovation Officer, HLB Global

Silicon Valley has taught us that most disruptive innovations often come from the edges - from those who see the world differently and refuse to accept "that's how we have always done it" as an answer. What we are discovering through data and experience is that neurodivergent minds aren't outliers in innovation - often they're the source of it.

When we examine the digital tools reshaping our profession, such as machine learning algorithms that detect financial anomalies to AI-powered insights revolutionising advisory services, a pattern emerges. These weren't created by teams working in lockstep, but by diverse minds approaching problems from radically different angles.

Our research reveals something technology leaders have suspected but rarely measured: cognitive diversity isn't just correlated with innovation - it's often the catalyst.

While AI can process millions of transactions and flag anomalies based on historical patterns, it takes a human mind that processes information differently to ask, "what if we are looking at this completely wrong?".

The accounting profession sits at a unique inflection point. We're witnessing the emergence of technologies that are fundamentally changing what it means for professionals in our industry.

But our data shows us that the firms that are truly thriving aren't just adapting new technology - they are building teams that think about technology differently.

The future we are building is one where human intelligence and artificial intelligence work in harmony. But that partnership only reaches its full potential when we include the full spectrum of human cognition. Our algorithms are only as innovative as the minds that design, implement and interpret them. The most sophisticated AI is still limited by the assumptions and blind spots of its creators.

This research doesn't just document correlation, it reveals causation. Organisations that actively cultivate and support neurodiversity don't just become more innovative by chance. They systematically outperform because they've assembled the cognitive ingredients that innovation requires; different ways of seeing the problems, diverse approaches to solutions and the creative tension that emerges when varied perspectives collide.

In an industry increasingly defined by its relationship with technology, embracing neurodiversity isn't just about inclusion it's about competitive advantage in its purest form.



# INTRODUCTION



The way we talk about how our minds work, and how they differ, is changing. Once limited to clinical discussions, the term neurodiversity is now a mainstream topic of conversation.

For many, initial awareness of neurodiversity comes through parenting. When they see their child learn or think differently or that they reach “standard” developmental milestones at a different pace to the majority of their peers. It’s often these moments when we come to recognise the natural variations in how our brains work.

Likewise, it’s when the shortcomings of one-size-fits all approach that characterises most of our societal systems, are most visible - whether that be educational institutions, career pathways, or professional development. The reality is that our brains are wired differently, and the structures around us often aren’t accommodating to that diversity.

Once you see how exclusion is built into these systems, it becomes impossible to ignore the need for reform. Change is taking effect in education. “We understand that neurodiverse

children bring a rich variety of strengths and perspectives to our school community, and we have worked hard to build awareness and understanding across staff, pupils, and families”, shared Angela Micklethwaite, Assistant Head Teacher (Inclusion) at Holy Family Catholic Primary School in the UK. “This shared understanding begins in the early years of primary school and plays a vital role in empowering children and breaking down misconceptions. By promoting empathy, respect, and open-mindedness, we are building a school culture where differences are celebrated and every child is supported to reach their full potential.”

Conversations about neurodiversity have become louder, broader, and more urgent. For example, universities around the world are developing specialised programmes that ensure students with diverse cognitive profiles can access, participate in, and succeed in higher education. In this case, things have been moving in the right direction.



Some of the most insightful people I've worked with think differently, and that's something to celebrate. Neurodiversity brings fresh thinking, deep focus, and unexpected connections that can spark real innovation. It challenges groupthink and helps us see things from angles we might have missed."

**Pete Wilmer**  
**Managing Partner, Hawsons (HLB UK)**



But there's still a long way to go, particularly in the professional workplace. In many cases, neurodivergent candidates don't make it past early recruitment stages. Similarly, managers can lack the awareness and skills to effectively support diverse working styles, inadvertently prioritising conformism over creativity. Likewise, leadership might not proactively see the value in making adjustments for neurodivergent employees.

To meaningfully support the wellbeing, efficiency, and impact of their workforce, employers face a choice: adapt, or risk missing out on exceptional problem-solvers and innovative thinkers. In this report, we explore how neurodiversity can become a source of strategic advantage for businesses and give practical insights into implementing better talent attraction, retention, and empowerment practices.



# BEYOND LABELS: WHAT NEURODIVERSITY MEANS



Very simply, neurodiversity refers to the different ways a person's brain handles information processing, communication, and sensory processing.

We all have our small preferences — shorter emails, audio memos, visual charts, or data rows. And we take in our surroundings differently, too. Some people have higher sensitivity to sounds. Others don't like casual contact. Some excel in creative problem-solving but lose focus on repetitive tasks. Others prefer a routine and thrive in work requiring precision. These differences are part of the natural spectrum of how human brains work.

While we all experience differences in how we process the world, for some, these variations are more pronounced. Around [1 in 5 people](#) are born with a neurodifference significant enough to affect how they navigate daily life, relationships, or work. But instead of being valued, these differences are often misunderstood or perceived negatively.

The term neurodivergent is often used to describe people whose cognitive functioning differs from what's considered typical. That can include a wide range of conditions:

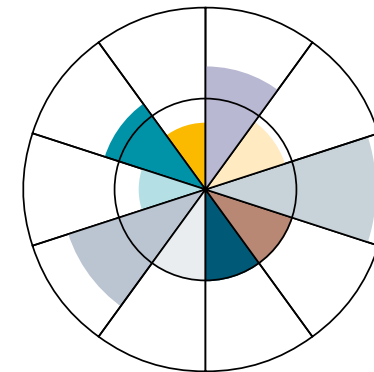
- > Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)
- > Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- > Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- > Variable Attention Stimulus Trait (VAST)
- > Dyspraxia
- > Dyslexia
- > Dysgraphia
- > Dyscalculia
- > Tourette's Syndrome (TS)

### HOW PEOPLE PERCEIVE NEURODIVERSITY

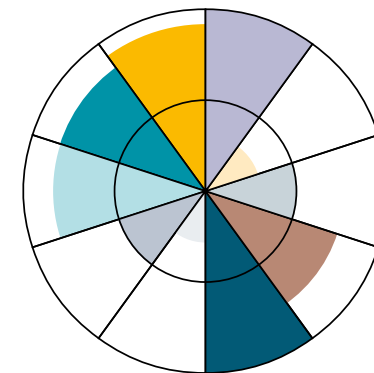


### HOW NEURODIVERSITY MIGHT MANIFEST IN ALL OF US

#### Neurotypical



#### Neurodiverse



- Executive function
- Emotional regulation
- Sensory differences
- Literal thinking
- Imagination
- Repetitive behaviours
- Interests
- Motor skills
- Language
- Social differences





Innovation is not the preserve of a few but the responsibility of all. Neurodiversity reinforces this truth, by unlocking the strengths of every mind, we make innovation a shared endeavour.”

**Natalie Turner**  
CEO, The Entheo Network

Stereotyping highlights a key misunderstanding: neurodivergence isn’t a single diagnosis — it’s a spectrum. Even among people with the same neurodifference, no two experiences are alike. Strengths, challenges, and needs can differ widely. For example, the inattentive type of ADHD is more likely among women, while hyperactive and/or impulsive ADHD symptoms are more pronounced in men.

Identity also plays a big role. Not everyone with a clinical diagnosis sees themselves the way society, or the law, might label them. Many neurodivergent individuals challenge and/or reject the label of ‘disabled,’ asserting their brains simply operate differently.

### WHY EMBRACE NEURODIVERSITY?

Neurodivergent people have differences in processing speed, thinking styles, communication preferences, or sensory perceptions. When these differences are understood, accepted, and supported in the workplace, everyone benefits.

“In nearly 30 years of working within the disability community, and as a Certified Diversity Professional, I’ve seen firsthand how neurodiverse individuals bring extraordinary



strengths to teams,” says Mari-Anne Kehler, Partner, Chief Strategy Officer of GHJ (HLB USA). “As research has proven, neurodiversity challenges groupthink, strengthens risk assessment, and helps teams see complexity with greater clarity. This isn’t just about inclusion; it’s about tapping into the full range of human intelligence to drive better results.” By better understanding neurodiversity, we can move beyond misleading labels and (un)conscious biases towards more inclusive, creative, and effective teams.

## CASE STUDIES

### JPMORGAN CHASE

Employs over 300 autistic employees globally as part of its Autism at Work initiative. These teams statistically make fewer errors and are between [90% to 140%](#) more productive than neurotypical employees.

### SAP

Runs a neurodiversity programme since 2013 and employs diverse colleagues across 25+ job types. One of SAP's autistic employees devised a solution that reduced the processing time for mass invoices from several days to [20 minutes](#).

### MICROSOFT

Established in 2015, Microsoft's Neurodiversity Hiring Programme has placed neurodiverse individuals into [33 different role types](#), helping the company address critical skills shortages and maintain its competitive edge.

## NEURODIVERSE EMPLOYEES BRING UNIQUE PROBLEM-FRAMING ABILITIES

Innovation thrives on difference. While many people refine what already exists, neurodivergent thinkers often ask: Why are we doing it this way at all?

IKEA's iconic product naming system wasn't a clever branding play. It was Ingvar Kamprad's way of working around his dyslexia, replacing hard-to-remember codes with names he could visualise. Similarly, Sir Richard Branson attributes his ability to reimagine everyday frustrations to his neurodivergent thinking — from airline delays to complicated mobile contracts.

"During a brainstorming whiteboard session, one of our neurodivergent colleagues suggested an idea which truly provoked a reaction of 'wow, we've never thought of that before'", shares Mike Hatrick, Vice President IP Strategy & Portfolio at Volvo Group. "We spent some time working on it, and our customer really got interested in it as well. So it was a way of helping to demonstrate to our customer that we were innovative in our thinking, and when I reflected later I also realised it had been a great way to demonstrate to our own people that we welcomed creative ideas."

Neurodivergent talent brings more than bold ideas. It brings a range of unique skillsets. "Autistic focus, ADHD-driven adaptability, and dyslexic pattern recognition bring fresh perspectives to our IT advisory and data analytics team," shares Björn Roskott of Newtone, HLB Netherlands. "When each colleague takes impactful ownership in their own way, we don't just solve problems — we create innovative, resilient solutions that matter."

One of the most powerful contributions neurodiverse professionals make is their ability to approach problems from angles others often overlook. Their thinking may not follow conventional logic, and that's exactly the point. Neurodivergent individuals can often reframe challenges, question assumptions, and surface entirely new solutions.

Tania Martin experienced this firsthand during her time at EY. Tasked with redesigning a recruitment process for neurodivergent candidates, she worked with a team composed entirely of neurodivergent professionals. "We looked at the first iteration and then we rebuilt it based on the gaps they were telling me didn't work," she explains. "It was a really fascinating conversation when you've got a purely neurodivergent team who see it

from multiple different angles. The ideas and suggestions they were coming up with, I never would have come up with by myself.” The team’s alternative perspectives revealed flaws invisible to most and led to a more inclusive, award-winning hiring process.

This kind of insight isn’t limited to HR. Many autistic individuals, for example, excel at recognising complex patterns and paying close attention to detail — strengths that support specialised capabilities in areas like mathematics and abstract systems thinking. These talents can be especially valuable in STEM fields, where analytical rigour and problem-solving are core to performance.

As John Cullen, an Insolvency Practitioner, Menzies (HLB UK), puts it, “My brain lets me look at planning in a different order than most other people. I can picture quite easily what the future looks like for a business or a person, which allows me to create a strategy for my clients effectively. If there is no conventional way of achieving it, I will find an unconventional way, sometimes creating innovative solutions to complex problems.” His approach exemplifies how neurodiversity can power forward-looking strategy and innovation. “I perceive neurotypical thinking

like the engine of a business. Neurodiversity is the accelerator.”

### COGNITIVE DIVERSITY FUELS IDEA GENERATION

Innovation rarely emerges from harmony alone. In fact, a certain level of tension — creative, cognitive, even emotional — often underpins the most original breakthroughs. At Volvo Group, this tension is seen as a feature, not a flaw “Many creative people struggle with a self-defeating mindset of always feeling that there’s so much more to do, and are left feeling that we’re hardly scratching the surface of what’s possible,” shared Mike Hatrick. “But I think that sort of tension or frustration is maybe what fuels quite a lot of the innovation at Volvo Group, coupled with the fact that we’re in the middle of a huge technology transformation where it’s an imperative.” That drive — to push, challenge, question — doesn’t thrive in uniformity. It needs friction. It needs a difference.

This is where neurodiversity becomes a valuable asset. A [large population-based study](#) in the Netherlands found that individuals with ADHD or autistic traits showed significantly higher performance in measures of creativity,



such as fluency, flexibility, and originality, during divergent thinking tasks.

A key takeaway from the study is that individuals’ unique traits, like visual thinking and rapid idea association, allow some neurodivergent individuals to make bolder logical connections. A person with ADHD might spot connections between seemingly unrelated concepts. An autistic thinker might zoom in on the overlooked detail that unlocks a new perspective. These different ways of thinking expand companies’ abilities to problem-solve and strategise.

Importantly, it’s not just individual brilliance that matters — it’s how diverse minds work together. [Studies](#) comparing neurodiverse

pairs to single-neurotype pairs found that teams composed of different neurological profiles consistently produced more original and less redundant ideas. In other words, innovation scales when different types of thinkers collide constructively.

"Different minds don't just think outside the box—they reinvent it," shares David A. Garnett, Chairman, HLB Liberia. "Since new ideas frequently originate from unexpected places and solutions rarely come from a single source, we at HLB Liberia welcome neurodiverse viewpoints. This idea is reflected in our hiring practices, which guarantee that our teams are as diverse as the problems we seek to solve—food for thought can come from anywhere."

The implication is clear: companies that want to innovate need teams of unlike minds and a space to productively explore unconventional ideas. The emerging tension — the one that makes collaboration and innovation harder at first — might just be your most underused competitive advantage.

## Some advantages that neurodiverse people bring to organisations

### CASE STUDIES



**Unique problem-solving approaches.** They look at issues from unexpected angles



**Improved processes.** Uncover overlooked inefficiencies in tools, workflows, etc.



**Enhanced pattern recognition.** Spot trends, errors, or anomalies others may miss



**High levels of loyalty,** when supported and recognised for who they are



**Creative thinking.** Offer fresh perspectives that challenge status quo



**Strength in systems thinking.** See connections others might overlook



**Deep focus.** Excel in complex or detail-heavy tasks



**Risk awareness or risk tolerance.** Some anticipate risks early, others bring bold innovation



**Cognitive variety in teams** improves decision-making, reduces groupthink, and bolsters innovation



## INNOVATION FLOURISHES WHEN EVERYONE FEELS SAFE AND INCLUDED

It's clear that neurodivergent professionals bring exceptional talents to the workplace. But innovation doesn't happen in a vacuum. It requires an environment where people feel safe to be themselves, are encouraged to share ideas without fear, and know they are not being stereotyped.



Too often, neurodiverse employees who think or behave differently are misunderstood. One of the most talented engineers in the Volvo Group, for example, loves sneaking a tiny logo of the band AC/DC into all of his presentations. Once, during a quite formal Inventor Award event, he went up on stage and said, 'Right, now the freak is on the stage!'

**Mike Hatrick, Vice President IP Strategy & Portfolio at Volvo Group.**

While the comment was delivered with humour, it reflected a deeper truth: people who stand out — even for their strengths — can still feel like outsiders.

Unfortunately, neurodifferences don't always land well with colleagues or managers. Bias, stereotyping, and low tolerance of difference can lead to exclusion. According to the [Neuroinclusion at Work study](#), just over half of neurodivergent employees feel their organisation (52%) or team (54%) creates a climate where it's safe to talk about neurodiversity. Only 37% feel they receive meaningful support. Most alarmingly, a third say their experience at work has negatively impacted their mental well-being.

Neurodiverse employees need psychological safety to contribute their full potential. That means being able to take risks, speak up, and show up authentically without fear of judgment or rejection. And it's not just about them. The entire workforce performs better when inclusion is practised at all levels.

## WORKPLACE BARRIERS IN THE CURRENT SYSTEM

Despite growing awareness, many workplace systems remain structurally misaligned with the needs and strengths of neurodiverse professionals.

## EMPLOYERS FAIL TO HIRE PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES BECAUSE OF:

**Cost concerns:** Hidden or ongoing spending on adjustments

80%

**Lack of knowledge:** Don't know how to support or manage employees with disabilities

81%

**Difficulty assessing fit:** Worry if candidates could perform essential job functions

73%

**Perceived supervisory burden:** Believe that such employees require extra time and effort from managers

71%

**Performance and productivity fears:** Worried they'll be less reliable than their peers

69%

**Stereotypes and discrimination:** Think people with disabilities might not handle essential job tasks

55%

Source: [Institute for Health and Ageing, University of California San Francisco](#)

The first and often most significant barrier is recruitment. Traditional hiring practices have often filtered out neurodivergent candidates early in the process, not because of a lack of skill, but because of how talent is assessed. Vague job descriptions, ambiguous terms like “culture fit,” and blanket requirements such as “good soft skills” often act as coded exclusions.

“We’re often too broad in terms of what we look for within our teams,” notes Tania Martin. “What does having ‘great communication skills’ even mean?” In the US, only [1.3%](#) of all job posts include neurodiversity-related keywords, such as neurodiverse, neuroatypical, cognitive diversity, or specific terms related to diagnoses. In the UK, [54%](#) of applicants say recruitment processes are designed to ‘weed out’ neurodivergent people rather than assess abilities.

For those who do make it through the hiring process, further challenges often follow. Many organisations offer adjustments as part of the onboarding phase but fail to maintain support throughout the employee lifecycle. As Martin puts it, “You can’t attract more neurodivergent people and just expect them to fit in.” Without ongoing enablement, neurodiverse talent faces a higher risk of being misunderstood in performance evaluations, experiencing burnout, and then attrition.

## COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT HIRING AND ENGAGING NEURODIVERSE EMPLOYEES



### SPECIAL WORKPLACE ADJUSTMENTS WILL BE NECESSARY

[91%](#) of neurodivergent tech employees at SAP didn't ask for any adjustments, and only 9% requested some reasonable accommodations at work. Moreover, [58%](#) of (neuro)disability-related accommodations cost companies nothing to make.



### CLIENT-FACING OR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS WON'T BE A GOOD FIT

Professionals like Tania Martin and John Cullen actively lead strategic planning and client advisory work, leveraging their unique neurodiverse strengths.



### OVERSIGHT WILL BE A CHALLENGE, AND TEAM DYNAMICS RISK BEING DISRUPTED

[80%](#) of DCX neurodiversity programme participants say it doesn't add any additional overhead work. Overall, companies with neurodiverse hiring programmes report higher employee retention and productivity.



### FORMAL DIAGNOSIS OR DISCLOSURE WILL BE REQUIRED

No compliance laws in the US, UK, or EU that require companies to disclose the neurodiverse conditions of employees.

Workplace culture itself can also be a sticking point. Many operational processes were designed for a narrow idea of how people should think, work, and behave.

Group meetings often reward those who speak quickly and confidently, not necessarily those with the brightest ideas. And performance is too often evaluated through unified KPIs, which fail to account for different work styles or thinking patterns. Such traditional workplace practices remain largely unchallenged, not because they work for everyone, but because they're familiar and change can feel daunting.

This degree of uniformity can be further reinforced by leadership norms. "A lot of companies focus on efficiency, but that often leads to a mindset of urgency where we need to choose what we're doing very quickly, and that doesn't leave time for experimentation. We don't leave time to explore multiple options in parallel," observes Mike Hatrick. This focus on speed and efficiency often suppresses bolder and more innovative ideas.

There's also the influence of the highest paid person's opinion (HiPPO) prevalent in professional services, which can shape team dynamics for better or worse. When senior leaders model curiosity, value diverse input, and make space for dissenting perspectives,

innovation thrives. But when decisions consistently follow the loudest or most senior voice in the room, it stifles fresh thinking. Employees may feel pressured to mirror this tone-from-the-top or adapt their personality just to get ahead.

The lack of cultural change can be costly as it leads to missed talent, weaker innovation capacity, higher staff attrition, and, ultimately, revenue loss. “As leaders, our job isn’t to fit people into moulds,” says John Varghese, Managing Partner at HLB HAMT. “It’s to remove barriers so their talents can flourish. Let’s build a future where neurodiversity is recognised as the engine of progress.”

### FUTURE SUCCESS STARTS WITH PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

[Indra Nooyi, Former CEO of PepsiCo](#), has campaigned for the idea of putting people over profits. Rather than focusing solely on shareholder returns, she championed a “Performance with Purpose” strategy — the idea that companies must serve society, not just their shareholders.

Under her leadership, PepsiCo added a range of healthier options to its product portfolio, curbed water usage and greenhouse gas emission rates, and improved the company’s diversity, inclusion, and talent development. Despite leading through a major economic downturn, Nooyi managed to increase PepsiCo’s annual revenue from [\\$35 billion to \\$63.5 billion](#), the market capitalisation to \$57 billion, and total shareholder return to 162% during her tenure between 2006 and 2018. Most importantly, she proved the point that treating people well and delivering strong business performance aren’t competing goals — they’re interdependent.

Today’s talents seek meaningful and rewarding workplaces, where they are treated as individuals, not just assets to use and manage. The [2025 Edition of Workmonitor](#) from Randstad found that work-life balance is now the key motivator for choosing a role, outweighing pay. Moreover, this year, twice as many people have quit their jobs because they didn’t feel comfortable expressing themselves, signalling a strengthening need for inclusion and belonging.

Today, the idea of human-centred leadership is gaining even stronger grounds.



We have witnessed how embracing gender inclusion has transformed workplaces and societies for the better. But inclusion doesn’t stop there. It’s time we turn our attention to neurodiversity — the rich spectrum of how different minds think, learn, and create. By unfolding this spectrum, we don’t just promote equality; we unlock new perspectives that fuel creativity, problem-solving, and true innovation. And I am confident in stating that — the future belongs to those who include every mind in the conversation.”

**Surabhi Bansal**  
HLB India



Traditional corporate systems often force neurodivergent employees to mask their authentic selves or struggle in environments designed for neurotypical brains. But, when leaders design organisations with flexibility in mind, and build cultures that welcome different ways of thinking, higher engagement, better retention, and breakthrough innovations follow.

## COMPANIES WITH NEURODIVERSITY PROGRAMMES EXPERIENCED:

# 90%

**90% retention rates**  
among participants of  
the neurodiversity hiring  
programs

# 3X

**3X lower** staff attrition in  
inclusive teams, compared  
to non-inclusive teams in  
Australia

# 15%

**15% increase in innovation**  
**outputs**, thanks to diverse  
problem-solving approaches



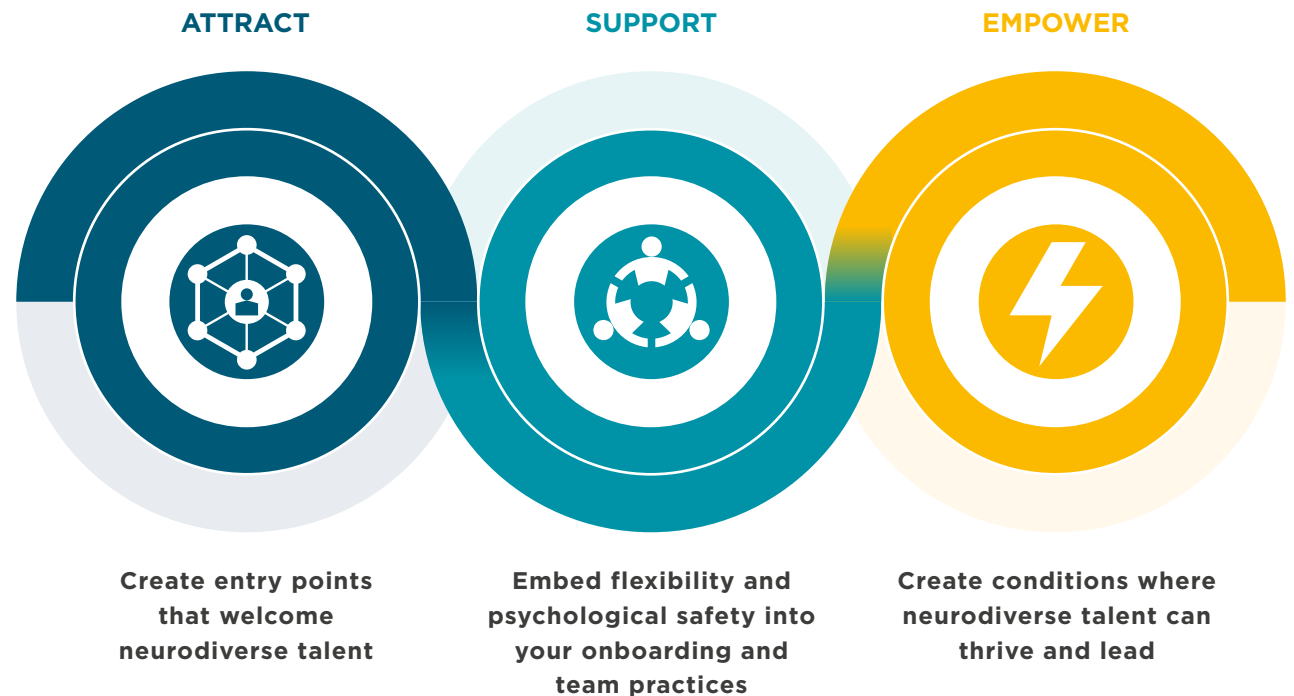
# TAKING THE LEAD: HOW TO ATTRACT, SUPPORT, AND EMPOWER NEURODIVERSE TALENTS



Neuroinclusion isn't a checkbox or a one-off initiative — it's a mindset that must be embedded across every stage of the employee experience. Companies often approach neurodiversity in pockets. They make changes in certain areas, as opposed to holistically, across the whole organisation. But scattered efforts won't create a lasting impact."

**Tania Martin, Founder and Neurodiversity Consultant at PegSquared.**

To unlock the full potential of neurodiverse talent, organisations need to activate a continuous, connected approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion — from how they attract and assess candidates, to how they support and grow them once they're inside. What follows is a framework to help you do just that.





# ATTRACT

CREATE ENTRY POINTS  
THAT WELCOME NEURODIVERSE  
TALENT

## JOB DESIGN & ROLE FRAMING

- › **Break roles into strengths-based clusters.** Focus on core competencies and preferred experiences, not generic expectations across every skill area.
- › **Avoid ‘superhuman’ language.** Replace vague phrases like “strong communicator” with preferred capabilities and qualifications.
- › **Be specific.** Lay out the duties and expectations for the role. Talk about flexibility and accommodations in place.

## RECRUITMENT EXPERIENCE

- › **Offer different interview modalities.** Replace traditional panels with alternative options like task-based assessments or asynchronous video responses.
- › **Let candidates disclose needs without penalty.** Include a low-pressure disclosure option during the application process (e.g., “Would you like us to make any adjustments for you?”).
- › **Introduce candidate scorecards** with unified grading criteria to promote greater objectivity in evaluations, reduce bias, and speed up hiring decisions.

## EMPLOYER BRANDING

- › **Showcase neurodiverse voices in employer materials** to signal safety early in the recruitment process.
- › **Share accessibility and adjustment policies publicly** to level-set expectations and help candidates better envision themselves at your company.
- › **Plan targeted outreach.** Partner with neurodiversity-focused networks, employee resources groups, or charities to introduce your brand to more neurodiverse individuals.





## SUPPORT

**EMBED FLEXIBILITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY INTO YOUR ONBOARDING AND TEAM PRACTICES**

### ONBOARDING

- › **Segment onboarding into digestible stages.** Avoid information overload by spacing learning across weeks instead of days. Suggest a clear list of steps/tasks each hire needs to accomplish within the first 1/7/14/30 days.
- › **Create “how I work” profiles.** Invite new hires and team members to share preferred ways of working and learn more about those of their teammates.
- › **Clarify unwritten rules.** Make implicit norms (e.g. lunch breaks, camera use, communication tone) explicit and optional.

### INCLUSION

- › **Promote self-regulation tools.** Normalise the use of noise-cancelling headphones or breaks without explanation. Set up quiet zones or quiet hours for sensory rest and deep work.
- › **Offer flexible participation modes.** Allow employees to join meetings with cameras off, contribute via chat, or follow up asynchronously, especially in larger or high-pressure group settings.
- › **Encourage self-advocacy.** Help employees feel confident asking for what they need without fear of stigma or retribution through group meetings and private channels.

### ENGAGEMENT

- › **Let employees choose the feedback format.** Train managers to deliver strengths-based feedback in different ways — written, via audio notes, during real-time chats or face-to-face meetings.
- › **Build regular low-pressure check-ins into team culture.** Encourage managers to make 1:1s a space for open-ended conversations, not just performance updates, and let employees set the agenda sometimes.
- › **Track lived experience, not just policies.** Use pulse surveys or anonymous channels to understand how support is actually landing.



## EMPOWER

CREATE CONDITIONS WHERE  
NEURODIVERSE TALENT CAN  
THRIVE AND LEAD

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- › **Use talent mapping techniques** to evaluate cognitive skills. Include dimensions like pattern recognition, divergent thinking, or creative risk-taking in development planning to fully leverage your people's strengths.
- › **Offer personalised learning pathways.** Provide flexible, modular training options that account for varied attention spans, sensory needs, or learning styles (e.g. video, text, micro-learning).
- › **Create reverse mentoring programmes.** Pair senior leaders with neurodivergent employees to build empathy, challenge assumptions, and surface new ideas.

### PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

- › **Update your performance review criteria.** Look beyond standard, quantifiable measures like "billable hours" or "productivity index". Think about how individuals "brought new lenses to a challenge" or "added unexpected value".
- › **Normalise non-linear progress.** Recognise that development may not follow traditional timelines or an upward trajectory, but can still lead to high-impact, high-value contributions.
- › **Coach for confidence, not conformity.** Support neurodivergent talent with executive coaching or peer sponsors who understand that success may look and sound different.

### SUCCESSION PLANNING

- › **Spot and sponsor emerging leaders early.** Build inclusive succession plans that actively identify and back neurodiverse talent at entry- and mid-level positions.
- › **Show success stories in leadership communications.** Feature neurodivergent leaders or team contributors in organisation-wide communication to break the perception of the 'glass ceiling'.
- › **Make promotion criteria transparent and flexible.** De-emphasise subjective traits like "executive presence" and clarify how multiple types of leadership show up and what type of capabilities, qualities, and impacts are expected across roles.

## MEASURING THE IMPACTS OF NEURO-INCLUSION PROGRAMMES

When done right, neuro-inclusion drives better outcomes across innovation, retention, and engagement. “Neurodiversity brings unique perspectives that spark innovation”, says Pablo Kaplan, Managing Partner of HLB Argentina. “Just like in sports — where legends like Lionel Messi or Michael Phelps transformed traits once seen as limitations into unmatched strengths — neurodivergent professionals often approach problems in ways that lead to breakthrough solutions. In business, leaders have shown how thinking differently can redefine entire industries. Embracing neurodiversity isn’t just about inclusion — it’s about unlocking potential, driving creativity, and building teams ready to lead in a changing world.”

To better understand how their company can serve their people — and the society at large — better, leaders need to practice listening. Use feedback surveys, sentiment data, and regular check-ins to reveal how people actually experience the workplace and perceive your company. Measure belonging and psychological safety, not just traditional engagement metrics. Without data, neurodiversity risks remaining a symbolic gesture rather than a strategic driver of growth.

To get a comprehensive picture of their neuro-inclusion efforts, leaders should track metrics across three dimensions: representation, enablement, and outcomes.

Representation and recruitment	Enablement and inclusion	Performance and retention
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of neurodivergent employees (via self-identification, where appropriate)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and type of adjustments requested and fulfilled</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retention rates of neurodivergent employees compared to the company average</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Application-to-hire conversion rate for neurodiverse candidates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Psychological safety scores in engagement or pulse surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promotion or career progression data for neurodiverse talent</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use of inclusive recruitment practices (e.g., task-based assessments, alternative formats)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manager training completion rates on neuro-inclusive leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exit interview data referencing support (or lack of) for neurodivergent needs</li> </ul>
Overall organisational impacts		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External recognition (e.g., awards, benchmarks, client feedback on diversity practices)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inclusion index scores tied to team creativity, collaboration, and decision-making</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of implemented ideas or innovations generated by cognitively diverse teams</li> </ul>

By using a combination of quantitative insights and qualitative feedback, leaders can determine what's working and where inclusion efforts need to increase to create a more equitable, trust-based, and innovative culture.

### FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION

Learning to accept differences as strengths, not flaws, enables companies to unlock the full potential of their workforce and improve business performance, as evidence from across sectors suggests. What's more important is that the shift towards neuroinclusion does not have to be sweeping. Many high-performing organisations have begun with small, targeted changes in hiring, people management, and workplace design. Over time, these adjustments progressively contribute to more profound transformations. If you want to start making progress in this direction, our Neurodiversity Toolkit is your next step. It provides practical guidance for decoding different work styles, transforming collaboration, and leading with intention. Use it to help every mind contribute, belong, and excel.





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Abu Bakkar, HLB Global

Amy Spillard, HLB Global

Angela Micklethwaite, Holy Family Catholic  
Primary School

Anna Priore, Eide Bailly LLP (HLB USA)

Bill Bradshaw, Withum (HLB USA)

Bill Hagaman, HLB Global

Björn Roskott, Newtone (HLB Netherlands)

Callahan Hager, HLB Global

Colin Nelson, Hype Innovation

David A. Garnett, HLB Liberia

Elena Prokopets

Felipe Pirajá, HLB Brazil

John Cullen, Menzies (HLB UK)

John Varghese, HLB HAMT

Kapil Kukreja, HLB Mann Judd

Marco Donzelli, HLB Global

Mari-Anne Kehler, GHJ (HLB USA)

Mark Butler, HLB Ireland

Martin Ellis, HLB Global

Mike Hatrick, Volvo Group Mouzhan

Mangum, PYA (HLB USA) Natalie

Turner, The Entheo Network Pablo

Kaplan, HLB Argentina

Paul Ashburn, HLB Thailand

Pete Wilmer, Hawsons

Rita Carolan, HLB Global

Sasha Aulakh, HLB Global

Shannon Smith, Eide Bailly LLP (HLB USA)

Simon Massey, Menzies (HLB UK)

Stephanie Rix, HLB Global

Surabhi Bansal, HLB India

Tania Martin, PegSquared

Vijay LNarasimhan, HLB Malta

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